

## **Appendix 5**

### **Sawtooth National Recreation Area Fire Prevention Team Reports**



**Sawtooth Fire Prevention Education Team  
Stanley Basin/Sawtooth Valley  
Final Report  
August 6-20, 2003**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **Background**

The Sawtooth National Forest was experiencing severe drought conditions throughout the forest. ERC values were above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile, with 1000-hour fuels showing 9-11%, and live fuel moistures ranging from 70-134%. The pine beetle epidemic around the Stanley Basin and the high number of homes in the wildland urban interface increased the potential for large wildfires that put community and firefighter safety at risk. In addition, there is high interest in this area and abandoned campfires were one of the main ignition causes in 2002. The long-term fire weather forecast was predicted to remain hot and dry, with the possibility of extreme fire behavior.

Due to these variables, the Sawtooth National Forest requested severity funding to order a National Fire Prevention Team. The team was tasked with addressing the fire potential and looking at reducing the number of human-caused ignitions on the Sawtooth National Forest and its neighbors. Homeowners in this area were very concerned about the red tree problem and the high potential for a wildfire.

### **Report Contents**

This report contains the following major sections:

- **Communication Plan:** This plan describes the principal objectives, key messages, and target audience.
- **Tasks and Accomplishments:** This section discusses emphasis areas and lists the major accomplishments.
- **Appendix:** This section includes supplemental report information.

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## **2. Communication Plan**

### **Objectives**

- 1) Work with the Sawtooth National Forest to assess fire prevention needs.
- 2) Develop emergency response plans for wildland urban interface, coordinating with ranger districts and cooperators.
- 3) Raise public awareness of the critical burning conditions and the effect it could have on their communities, coordinated with the ranger districts and all cooperators. Encourage property owners and special use permittees to take responsibility for reducing fire risks on their property.
- 4) Coordinate efforts with the Red Tree Team Leader.
- 5) Assist ranger districts with development of prevention materials and events as needed.
- 6) Maintain flexibility within the scope of the Sawtooth's needs.
- 7) Coordinate all media efforts with the forest public affairs office.
- 8) Stay within pre-identified budget constraints.
- 9) Maintain timely, courtesy contacts with elected officials – Custer County Commissioners, City of Stanley (Mayor, City Council)

### **Key Messages**

The team worked with staff members from the Stanley Ranger Station to develop the following key messages:

#### **Situation:**

- The bark beetle infestation is a natural cycle. This problem occurred in the same area approximately 80 years ago.
- There is no way to stop the bark beetle epidemic.
- The potential of a high intensity wildfire is increasing due to high mortality of timber stands and natural fuel accumulation.

#### **Forest Service Response:**

- The Forest Service is taking a proactive approach to the problem by conducting hazard fuel reduction projects on 2,465 acres of National Forest land.
- Treatment methods will include pruning low-lying branches up to 10-15 feet in height, removing dead and down trees, piling and burning slash, cutting back tall shrubs, and encouraging the use of native fire safe plants for landscaping.
- Treatments will include areas within the immediate vicinity of structures and developments such as summer home areas, campgrounds, lodges, fences, and private land within 120 feet.
- An estimated 3.3 mmbf (million board feet) of lodgepole pine would be harvested during the next five years.

## Homeowner Responsibility

- Homeowners have responsibility for creating defensible space on their own property. This will help defend their home against wildfire as well as provide for firefighter and public safety should the home need to be defended against a wildfire.

Guidelines for removal of dead trees next to structures on private property for defensible space within the SNRA:

- Homeowners have a blanket authorization to clear live and dead vegetation from the first 30' around buildings or improvements on non-easement private land *where it is not visible from a primary travel corridor*.
- If building is visible from primary travel corridor, Tom Streit must be involved in that approval.

Guidelines for removal of dead trees next to structures from Recreation Residences and Organizational Camps under Special Use Permit within the SNRA:

- Permittees have a blanket authorization to clear dead vegetation (trees, hanging limbs, leaves, and grass) from the first 30' around buildings or improvements.
- Green trees not affected by beetles may remain, but need to have branches removed within 15' of the chimney or building, whichever is closer.
- If building is visible from visually sensitive areas such as recreation sites, lakes, rivers, and roads commonly traveled by recreationists, Tom Streit must be involved in that approval. *In order to protect cavity nesting birds species, trees cannot be removed between May 15<sup>th</sup> and July 30<sup>th</sup>*. However, if reviewed and approved by the Forest Service wildlife biologist, the tree may be removed.
- *Permit holder may remove leaning trees, dead or alive that are beyond 30' defensible space that pose a threat to cabin or improvement.*

*Note: The above information regarding SNRA regulations was the initial direction that the team was working under. Due to the red tree issue, these guidelines have been revisited by SNRA staff and clarification on direction has been made.*

## Target Audiences (In Order of Priority)

- Iron Creek and Goat Creek subdivision
- Redfish Lake Area
- Crooked Creek subdivision
- Stanley Basin Cabin Sites (Buckhorn)
- Fisher Creek subdivision
- Pettit Lake summer homes
- Valley View Summer Homes
- Smiley Creek

## Highlights of Methods and Products

The team produced the following materials:

- **Wildland Fire Preparation and Evacuation Plan:** This brochure is in the process of being distributed to all homeowners in each of the subdivisions on the priority list.
- **Wildland Fire Evacuation Response Plan:** This document was prepared for the use of the Sawtooth National Forest and local officials.
- **Subdivision Evacuation Maps:** These maps will be inserted into the wildland fire preparation and evacuation plan.
- **Redfish Lake Area Evacuation Map:** This shows the organizational structure that would be needed to evacuate the Redfish Lake area.



### **3. Tasks and Accomplishments**

The following tasks were accomplished for each objective:

#### **Objective 1: Assess fire prevention needs**

##### *Accomplishments:*

- Consulted with local officials including Mayor of Stanley, Blaine County Sheriff, Blaine County Disaster Services, Custer County Sheriff, Custer County Disaster Services, Sawtooth Valley Rural Fire Department, Sawtooth North Zone fire and fuels management staff and local LEO to assess needs and gather input for the wildland fire evacuation response plan.
- Made contact with Organizational Camps.
- Met with Jeff Clegg, Redfish Lake Lodge Manager, to assess their needs.
- Reviewed current fire prevention materials in use.
- Received briefing on SNRA regulations.
- Assessed local homeowner needs by reaching out to various communities in the area. The team acted as a resource for homeowners to express issues, concerns, and possible solutions for how to deal with defensible space and the red tree problem.

#### **Objective 2: Develop Evacuation Plans for Wildland/Urban Interface Areas**

##### *Accomplishments:*

- Developed format and components for plan.
- Developed ICS type command organization structure for evacuation.
- Contacted cooperators for input.
- Developed “Wildland Fire Preparation and Evacuation Plan” for homeowners.
- Developed “Wildland Fire Evacuation Response Plan” for agency officials.
- Developed maps for specific subdivisions.
- Obtained input from homeowners/resorts.

### **Objective 3: Raise Public Awareness**

#### *Accomplishments:*

- Established a key contact with each residential area/subdivision on our priority list. Met with each key contact to tour and map their subdivision. By working with key contacts in this manner, homeowners are aware of their responsibilities and have a sense of ownership in their plan. Key contacts have agreed to act as ambassadors in promoting community fire safety and defensible space awareness to absentee homeowners.
- Interviewed homeowners on issues, barriers, ideas, and solutions to enhance community fire safety. These issues were brought forward to the SNRA staff.
- Provided numerous homeowner consultations – residents expressed the need for a place to deposit slash.
- Interviewed homeowners regarding concerns/questions/ideas relating to making their subdivision/homes more fire safe.
- Provided Jack Cohen's video "Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions" to homeowner groups for internal distribution.
- Developed digital photo library for future needs.
- Initiated a plan to upgrade bulletin boards in subdivisions with red tree/defensible space/slash treatment information.
- Assisted homeowners by putting them in touch with Julie Thomas to help them in preparing National Fire Plan grant submissions.

### **Objective 4: Coordinate Effort with Red Tree Group**

#### *Accomplishments:*

- Met with members of the Red Tree team to discuss public concerns, regulations, project timeframes, and homeowner notification on project.
- Obtained direction from SNRA staff regarding SNRA regulations pertaining to hazardous fuel removal.
- Pulled information out of the Red Tree EA for use in the Communication Plan.
- Provided a forum for Red Tree representatives to provide updates on fuel reduction efforts by involving them in homeowner meetings.

## **Objective 5: Assist Ranger Districts with fire prevention material and events**

### *Accomplishments:*

- Developed “Wildland Fire Preparation and Evacuation Plan” for homeowners.
- Developed “Wildland Fire Evacuation Response Plan” for agency officials.
- Purchased copies of the Jack Cohen video “Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions” for use by the Forest and homeowners.
- Provided additional copies of “Living With Fire” tabloid for distribution to Forest and homeowners.
- Created maps for the following: all eight subdivisions on the priority list plus the Cow Camp Area, Homestead subdivision, and Cabin Creek Organization Camp.
- Conducted homeowner meetings to discuss defensible space and fuels treatments.
- Provided fire information to the Community of Stanley and surrounding areas during the first few days of the Canyon Creek incident.

## **Acknowledgements**

The team would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their assistance in preparing the maps and plans for areas in the Stanley Basin/Sawtooth Valley.

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## Homeowner Issues

## Appendix A

Issues from Homeowners	Iron Creek	Redfish Lake	Crooked Creek	Buckhorn	Fisher Creek	Pettit Lake	Valley View	Smiley Creek
Evacuation Planning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
One way in and out	X	X	X		X	X		
Locked gates on ranches (Emergency Egress)	X							
Would like punitive powers for non-compliance by FS	X							X
More info on defensible space	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Lack of knowledge on local fire behavior	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Absentee homeowners unaware of problem	X		X	X	X			X
Slash disposal (dump getting filled up)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Lack of updates on Red Tree Project – specifics on fuel break locations, treatment along roads, and projected timetables for completion	X	X	X	X			X	X
Width of access road – single lane will create bottleneck	X	X	X	X		X		
Potential power shut-off by local power company (loss of water at residence for protection)	X		X	X		X	X	X
Concerned that campfires are allowed in campground above subdivision	X		X	X				
Afraid to burn			X	X	X		X	X
Lack of follow-up by FS								X
No structure protection					X	X	X	X

## Homeowner Questions

## Appendix B

Questions from Homeowners	Iron Creek	Redfish Lake	Crooked Creek	Buckhorn	Fisher Creek	Pettit Lake	Valley View	Smiley Creek
Does FS have own lock on ranch gates?	X							
Can FS institute punitive powers for property owners that don't reduce Red Tree fuels on their property?	X							X
Dump is only open 2 days per week. Is there another location to get rid of slash?	X		X				X	X
Need help with grant application: -Not getting response from HFT project manager -Don't know cost per acre for fuel treatment	X		X		X			
Does the FS have a chipper to loan out to homeowners?	X						X	X
Does the FS have a dump truck to loan out to homeowners?	X							
Can a water district apply for a national fire grant?								X
Has my application for permission to install a 500 gallon per minute well been approved?								X



**Sawtooth Fire Prevention & Education Team 2  
Stanley Basin/Sawtooth Valley  
Final Report  
August 19 – September 1, 2003**

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## **Introduction**

## **Background**

The second National Fire Prevention and Education Team began in Stanley, Idaho on August 19, 2003 and departed on September 1, 2003. This two-person team continued to implement much of what Team One had begun.

Most work was done with private homeowners, educating them about the importance of defensible space, answering questions about fuel treatments, potential contractors, slash disposal, and grant information and defensible space maintenance. U.S. Forest Service special use permittees at organizational camps were also contacted and similar concerns were discussed.

## **Report Contents**

This report contains the following major sections:

- Communication Plan
- Objectives and Accomplishments
- Recommendations:

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## **Communication Plan**

## **Objectives**

1. Work with homeowner groups and special use permittees in doing fuel hazard assessments for reducing fire risks.
2. Distribute Fire Preparedness and Evacuation Plans to property owners.
3. Attend homeowner meetings and promote defensible space.
4. Develop a list of contractors who do fuel hazard reduction work.

## **Key Messages**

Continue to implement Team One's messages:

**Situation:**

- The bark beetle infestation is a natural cycle. This problem occurred in the same area approximately 80 years ago.
- There is no way to stop the bark beetle epidemic.
- The potential of a high intensity wildfire is increasing due to high mortality of timber stands and natural fuel accumulation.

**Target Audiences**

- Iron Creek and Goat Creek subdivision
- Redfish Lake Area
- Crooked Creek subdivision
- Stanley Basin Cabin Sites (Buckhorn)
- Fisher Creek subdivision
- Pettit Lake summer homes
- Valley View Summer Homes
- Smiley Creek
- Smokey Bear Organizational Camp
- Luther Heights Organizational Camp
- Perkins Camp Organizational Camp
- Cabin Creek Organizational Camp

## **Objectives and Accomplishments**

### **Objective 1: Assess fire prevention needs**

#### *Accomplishments:*

- (Same as Team 1) Assessed local homeowner needs by reaching out to various communities in the area. The team acted as a resource for homeowners to express issues, concerns and possible solutions on how to deal with defensible space and the red tree problem.

### **Objective 2: Continue to develop evacuation information for wildland / urban interface areas.**

#### *Accomplishments:*

- Developed organizational camp evacuation maps
- Obtained input from homeowners and permittees

### **Objective 3: Raise Public Awareness**

#### *Accomplishments:*

- Attended a meeting in which Julie Thomas showed homeowners how to apply for National Fire Plan grants.
- Toured homeowner developments and tried to educate people on how to make their property more fire defensible.
- Continued to discuss with homeowners, as did Team 1, about how they can dispose of their slash.
- Provided “Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions” video to homeowner groups.
- Put Stage II Fire Restriction message on the continually scrolling AM 1610 radio announcement from the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery.
- Supplied the Redfish Lake Visitor Center employees with Smokey Bear pins to handout at the August 23-24 Salmon Festival in Stanley.
- Advise homeowners of where they may find contractors to do fuel cleanup work.

## **Recommendations**

1. Continue the efforts already made with homeowners groups concerning defensible space. The team heard comment from the public that this was the best contact the Forest Service had made with the locals
2. Plan and implement a disaster drill in one of the subdivisions that will include all of the emergency services agencies in the county.
3. Distribute all evacuation plans and maps to fire suppression forces.

4. Continue to work with the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery about putting fire prevention messages on their 1610 AM radio.
5. Hire a temporary-seasonal employee at the Stanley Ranger Station to work with the private landowners concerning the red tree problem.
6. Have local fire suppression forces visit each of the private developments and become familiar with the areas.

### **Acknowledgements**

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